"LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS"

- Production Information -

Mushnik's Flower Shop is the sleaziest floral store on Skid Row. Wilting corsages, dark brown greenery and bums sprawled in the doorway add credence to the deep-rooted belief that whatever it is that lures people "downtown," it isn't flowers.

With business drooping lower than his Creeping Charlie, Mushnik has decided to throw in the trowel and lay off his only two employees, the klutzy orphan Seymour and brave, blonde, battered Audrey. Then Seymour purchases a strange and interesting plant from an ancient Mandarin during a total eclipse of the sun.

And business blooms.

Customers converge on the shabby premises, attracted by the odd potted pod in the window. Christening his prize Audrey II in honor of his secret love, Seymour showers it with mulch, gro-light and affection.

But, as it develops, there's only one type of nourishment that Audrey II craves--and it's not available at your local nursery!

The Geffen Company presents a Frank Oz Film, "Little Shop of Horrors," released by The Geffen Company through Warner Bros. Produced by David Geffen and directed by Frank Oz, the monster musical comedy stars Rick Moranis, Ellen Greene and Vincent Gardenia, with a special appearance by Steve Martin

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and cameo appearances by John Candy, James Belushi and Christopher Guest.

The screenplay and lyrics were written by Howard Ashman and the music composed by Alan Menken, who collaborated on the off-Broadway and London stage hit on which the movie is based.

The stage hit, which has since blossomed into a perennial, was inspired by Roger Corman's "Grade Z" horror film of the same title. Shot in 1960 on an unbelievable schedule of two days and a night (largely because Corman was offered a storefront left over from another movie), "Little Shop of Horrors" went on to become a cult classic.

It was also notable for the brief, bizarre appearance of relative newcomer Jack Nicholson as a masochistic dental patient.

New York theatre critics gave the stage production of "Little Shop of Horrors" a blue ribbon reception. The New Yorker's Edith Oliver hailed it as "a musical comedy that is both musical and comic... full of surprises and marvelous effects." Richard Corliss in Time magazine welcomed "a carnivore with its own intimidating charm" which "envelops the stage and (gasp!) most of the audience."

Winning the Drama Critics' Circle, Drama Desk and Outer Critics' Circle Awards as the season's best musical, the show spawned an American touring company (which is still going strong), a two-year London run, and productions in France, Scandinavia, Israel, Japan, Germany, Australia and

Iceland.

With the acquisition of the screen rights by the David Geffen Company, the voracious Venus people-trap had blossomed thrice. Geffen's goal was to fuse the elements of the original story and the show into its own unique entity.

The time-frame, he decided, would remain intact. Downtown, it is still 1960. Here, Seymour Krelborn (RICK MORANIS) toils slavishly for Mushnik (VINCENT GARDENIA), who plucked him "as a tyke" from the Skid Row Home for Homeless Boys. In his basement bedroom, where he raises exotic foliage, Seymour pines for Audrey (ELLEN GREENE), the lithe, blonde salesgirl with the Betty Boop voice and cinema noir wardrobe.

But Audrey is literally a prisoner of love. Her steady crush--in more ways than one--is Orin Scrivello (STEVE MARTIN), a biker dentist whose delight for burning rubber is only exceeded by his joy for inflicting pain. When he isn't giving root canals a bad name or getting high on his own nitrous oxide, Scrivello spends most of his time putting Audrey in traction.

One night, in the depths of Mushnik's cellar, Seymour pricks his finger on a rose--and Audrey II gets her first slurp of RH negative.

Audrey II grows. Seymour grows anemic. Audrey II demands more "sticky, licky sweets." Seymour buys more Band-Aids. If Mushnik's prosperity and his exhausted

errand boy are both to survive, fresh blood must be added to the floral food chain...

For director Frank Oz, the challenge of "Little Shop of Horrors" was "deceptive." The project, he says, "looked simple, but wasn't. If we played it too camp, the audience wouldn't care about the characters. If we were too straight, we'd veer toward melodrama."

What evolved was what Oz calls "heightened reality." In opening the stage show to encompass the littered alleyways, decrepit tenements and end-of-the-line elevated train of Mushnik's neighborhood, he and Oscar-winning production designer Roy Walker created a fantasy Skid Row. But within the sprawling set--which consumed every square inch of Pinewood Studios' "007" stage (the largest in the world)--Oz also sought a certain "intimacy."

"I didn't want to balloon it into a musical 'War and Peace' or even a big, splashy '40s extravaganza," says the director. "There are no dizzying overhead crane shots. No irrelevant dance numbers. Nothing to overwhelm what is basically the simple story of a boy, a girl and a man-eating plant."

Several production numbers, however, display amusing affection for film lore. The hollow-eyed vagrants, shuffling through the gutters of "Downtown," recall Busby Berkeley's Depression-era classic, "My Forgotten Man." "Somewhere That's Green" is a paean to the suburban never-never land of scores of movies and '60s sitcoms.

Within the "heightened reality," Oz and Geffen gathered a colorfully incongruous cast.

Seymour is played by Rick Moranis, one of the Canadian Second City troupe's non-fraternal "McKenzie Brothers," who breezed through "Ghostbusters" as Sigourney Weaver's randy next-door nebbish. His "Little Shop..." role as a botanical body snatcher required "more straight acting than anything I'd done before," says Moranis. "But the real attraction was the chance to sing. Until now, I'd been limited mostly to parody."

Ellen Greene, on the other hand, knew the role of Audrey "like a second skin," having played it for two years--in New York, Los Angeles and London. (Time magazine praised her portrayal of "a sweet, sexy, slightly dizzy blonde with an Elmer Fudd lisp, wittle-girl wiles" and a voice that "buckles theatre walls.")

Her character, comments Greene, first came into focus during costume fittings for the off-Broadway show. "We went through about five wigs before Audrey became a cornsilk blonde," she explains. Next came the low-cut leopard skin dresses, stiletto heels and jangling of the B-movie heroines who were Audrey's role models.

Vincent Gardenia insists that he was chosen as Mushnik because "Frank Oz liked my name." The Naples-born actor, who began his career as a teenager playing old men in New York's Italian theatre, calls Mushnik "a symphony of frustration. He's a man trying to cling to the past despite the depravity

building around him."

At the root of much of that depravity is Steve Martin's Doctor Scrivello. (Call him anything other than "Doctor" and he'll joyfully rip your eyeteeth out.) As the leather-clad "leader of the plaque," Scrivello parks his Harley Davidson, dons surgical whites and bounces from room to room in his "one patient-no waiting" office armed with a variety of evermore alarming implements. Martin claims that Scrivello makes Lawrence Olivier's sadistic oral surgeon in "Marathon Man" look like a public benefactor.

Scattered through "Little Shop of Horrors" are cameos by several well-known comedic actors. Renewing his Second City rapport with Rick Moranis, John Candy plays Wink Wilkenson, the one-man radio station who introduces Skid Row listeners to "the weirdest stuff" in the world--like Seymour Krelborn's incredible plant. "Spinal Tap's" Christopher Guest is the first customer to put his money down for a magnetic Audrey II. James Belushi is a huckster with a plan to cross-pollinate her cuttings.

Among the inspired notions of the stage musical was a "Greek chorus" of three teenaged girls who sashayed through the action... in perfect harmony and street-smart cynicism... like Skid Row Supremes.

To find the film's trio, auditions were held in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Washington, D.C. and London. Out of more than a thousand hopefuls tested, the youngsters chosen for their vocal power and brash energy were 18-year-old

Michelle Weeks as Ronette, 16-year-old Tichina Arnold as Crystal and 17-year-old Tisha Campbell as Chiffon.

With the trio assembled, there was still one character left to be cast: Audrey II. The challenge of creating a plant "like nothing ever seen on this planet," who would talk, sing and bite the hand that feeds her, was entrusted to Lyle Conway.

An acknowledged animatronics wizard, Conway has worked with Oz (and Jim Henson) on "The Muppet Show" and "The Dark Crystal," and had designed the enchanting Lewis Carroll character for Dennis Potter's "Dream Child."

Conway began the project with an "inspirational" field trip to London's famous botanical Eden, Kew Gardens. "I felt that at each stage of her development, Audrey II should have a distinct look. The 'baby' plant resembles a rosebud with lips modeled after Ellen Greene's. Then she grows... and grows more monstrous."

Conway next turned to the Atomic Energy Authority at Harwell, England, for technical advice on creating a core which would support... and control... the creature. "The scientists there saw it as a game, a pleasant break from their top-security work. They were immensely helpful," he says.

"Size," continues Conway "is the downfall of most mechanical marvels. Small creatures are relatively easy. Big ones suffer from gravity. Our challenge was to take something twelve and a half feet tall, weighing slightly

more than one ton, and make it rap and boogie with a life of its own."

One aspect which concerned director Oz was Audrey II's lip synching. "It had to be perfect," says Conway. "Frank didn't want big, flapping hamburger buns." To get the right effect took as many as forty puppeteers.

By the time Conway's work was finished, he'd gone through 15,000 hand-made leaves, 2,000 feet of vine, several hundred gallons of KY Jelly and 11 1/2 miles of cable. ("Just slightly more cable than was used to build the Brooklyn Bridge," he says proudly.)

But Audrey II was only half-alive.

Still to come was the character's voice, performed by Levi Stubbs, an original member of the Four Tops. Says musical director Robby Merkin: "If I die tomorrow, working with Levi will get me into heaven. Here's a modest, consummate pro who has been singing for thirty years in a group that changed the face of popular music.

"He can sing anything, any way you ask him. We showed him what the plant would look like and a light bulb went on in his head. From then on, he was the plant."

Combining the film's diverse elements into a hothouse of horrors began long before a camera turned. The first phase of the process was in the hands of production designer Roy Walker, an Academy Award winner for "Barry Lyndon," a nominee for "Yentl," and a subject of critical acclaim for his work with Roland Joffe on "The Killing Fields."

The "Little Shop of Horrors" storyboards were the work of Mike Ploog, who graduated from Marvel Comics (where he drew "Conan," "The Werewolf" and "Planet of the Apes"... "anything with hair on it") to films like "Superman II" and "Young Sherlock Holmes."

In creating his imaginary Skid Row, complete with "working" elevated train, Walker remained a stickler for detail. Set decorator Tessa Davies was dispatched to New York, on a scavenger hunt to find gas meters, soap boxes, doorknobs, street signs and hundreds of stage props, circa 1960.

The oddest item on Davies' shopping list were garbage cans from that era--complete with authentic garbage. "They had to be genuine and they had to be old," she says. "I went around the streets in a truck loaded with new garbage cans, offering to trade them for used ones. People thought I was crazy. I suspect I got away with it only because I was a foreigner."

Simultaneously, costume designer Marit Allen was rummaging through thrift shops, with the same sixties flavor in mind. "What helped was that the principals all had a definite idea of how they should dress," she says.

Ellen Greene wanted "clothes that suggested cast-offs from Kim Novak and Rita Hayworth. We agreed that there would be a point in the story where her image would change. When she falls in love with Seymour, she goes from red, black and leopard to softer shades."

Rick Moranis' wardrobe was designed to "help Seymour bridge the credibility gap, somewhere between a nerdy loser and a shy, appealing guy." Steve Martin was "discreet in his taste in black leather... more Elvis Presley than Hell's Angels."

Within the complex interweaving of humor, music, fantasy, horticulture, set design, special effects, choreography, puppetry and the ultimate threat to civilization, the core of the movie is its characters, says Oz. "They have to be people you believe in... people you laugh with, not at."

About the Cast...

As Seymour Krelborn, a fledgling Faust on Skid Row, RICK MORANIS moves downtown from the Central Park penthouse he occupied in "Ghostbusters." In that #1 comedy hit of 1984, he was the party animal who threw wild bacchanals across the hall from Sigourney Weaver, unaware that her Mid-Manhattan apartment was being repossessed--by dead spirits.

Playing New Yorkers of any stripe is no greater surprise to Toronto-born Moranis than the fact that he is an actor at all. "I always thought show business was for Americans," he says with his trademark sly grin. "I didn't realize Canadians could get involved."

In fact, he began his career as a radio engineer while he was still in high school. Although it was only part-time, it offered Moranis an unlooked-for opportunity: after consistently writing funny one-liners for his deejay friends,

he was given his own show, and soon became a popular on-air personality.

Seguing into cabaret comedy, Moranis performed in Toronto nightclubs, then moved into Canadian television. After several years of writing and performing, he was asked to join "Second City Television" in its third season. When the satirical comedy show was picked up by an American network, it not only won an Emmy but also brought Moranis national recognition.

In solo spots on "SCTV," Moranis earned special acclaim for his comedic portrayals of such personalities as Woody Allen and Dick Cavett, and won Emmys for comedy writing in 1981 and '82.

With Dave Thomas he created the McKenzie Brothers (Bob and Doug)--beer-guzzling philosophers from the Canadian north woods, whose goofy antics became an "SCTV" mainstay.

When the "McKenzie Brothers" made an album, it won a Grammy nomination. When they made their screen bow, it was as the stars, co-writers and co-directors of "Strange Brew"--the top-grossing Canadian film of 1983.

Moranis has since appeared in "Streets of Fire" and "Club Paradise," as well as "Ghostbusters."

Even though she wanted Audrey to "be ripe enough to fall off a tree," ELLEN GREENE insists there is something "playful and kittenish about her... she's a child/woman you fall in love with because of her imperfections."

That Greene knows her character inside out is to be expected. She played Audrey for two years on stage--18 months in Los Angeles and off-Broadway, and six months in London's West End.

A native New Yorker, whose grandfather was in the Yiddish theatre, she always knew she wanted to be a performer. Although her father was a dentist, one brother a doctor and the other a lawyer, her education-oriented family didn't stand in her way when she started calling on casting agents after finishing high school.

She finally landed a gig at Reno Sweeney's, a cabaret club on 13th Street, where she played piano, sang and bantered... and earned strong enough reviews to move up to off-Broadway.

With the New York Shakespeare Festival, Greene appeared in David Rabe's "In the Boom Boom Room," "Sorrows of Stephen," "Wake Up, It's Time to Go To Bed" and "Stage Directions."

She made her Broadway bow in the title role of "Rachel Lily Rosenbloom and Don't You Ever Forget It!" then appeared in "The Nature and Purpose of the Universe," "Teeth and Smiles" and opposite Michael York in "The Little Prince and the Aviator." Her performance as Jenny in "Threepenny Opera" brought her a Tony nomination.

After making her motion picture debut in Paul Mazursky's "Next Stop, Greenwich Village," Greene played Jill Clayburgh's friend in "I'm Dancing as Fast as I Can." "Little Shop of

Horrors" marks her third film.

When Mr. Mushnik, the flower shop owner, gives Audrey some fatherly advice--"A date gives you a corsage, not a multiple fracture"--he is simply acting in character. According to VINCENT GARDENIA, who portrays him, Mushnik is "a man of Old World manners, trying to cope with the craziness and cruelty around him."

A veteran character actor in films, theatre and television, Gardenia was born in Naples, Italy, in 1922, and played his first role at the age of five--in Brooklyn, where his family settled after emigrating.

Graduating from juvenile to leading roles in New York's Italian theatre, the growing Gardenia was in his mid-30s when he began his professional career in earnest. His breakthrough came with off-Broadway's "The Man With the Golden Arm," the 1954 shocker about drug addiction.

After enhancing his reputation with "The Brothers Karamazov," "The Visit," "Death of a Salesman" and "A View From the Bridge," Gardenia won the coveted Tony for his performance in Neil Simon's bittersweet "The Prisoner of Second Avenue." He followed up with roles in three more Simon plays--"God's Favorite" (written especially for him), "Plaza Suite" and "California Suite." He most recently appeared on Broadway in the 1984-85 hit, "Glengarry Glen Ross."

Interestingly enough, Gardenia, who emanates an easy Italian warmth, has alternated between softies and cold-blooded killers in his screen career. He made his bow in

"Cop Hater" in 1958, appeared in "Murder Inc" and played mobster Dutch Schultz in "Mad Dog Coll." But he won his Oscar nomination for his crusty, kindly baseball team manager in 1973's "Bang the Drum Slowly."

Other films include "Death Wish," "The Front Page" with Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau, and "Heaven Can Wait," with Warren Beatty.

His close-cropped hair is hidden under a black wig that recalls the glory that was "Grease," his sunshine smile is twisted into a sadistic leer, and he handles women like Cagney on a bad day. But as Orin Scrivello, D.D.S. (Doctor of De Sade), STEVE MARTIN has a role he can sink his teeth into.

One of the outstanding comics of the past 15 years, Martin has won Emmys for his television work, Grammys for his record albums, and an Oscar nomination for his screen bow as "The Absent Minded Waiter," a 1978 short film.

Born in Waco, Texas, he was raised in Southern California, where he sold Disneyland guidebooks at 10, and did magic and comedy routines at Knott's Berry Farm in his teens.

After earning his degree in Theatre Arts from UCLA, Martin, then 21, entered television as a writer on the popular "Smothers Brothers Show" (his first Emmy). He soon added such clients as Sonny and Cher, Pat Paulsen, Glen Campbell and John Denver to his list, but by the late 1960s began performing his own material.

After serving as the opening act for musical groups like the Carpenters and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Martin hit his stride through frequent appearances on Johnny Carson's "Tonight Show," and other TV guest shots. Expressions like "Excuuuuuuse me" and "I'm a wild and crazy guy" became part of the language.

Martin's career soon encompassed his own television specials, sold-out concerts and gold-plated comedy albums. His first two--"Let's Get Small" and "Wild and Crazy Guy"--won Grammys, while "Comedy is Not Pretty" and "King Tut" sold in the millions.

With "The Jerk," which he co-wrote, Martin moved into feature films in 1979. He has since starred in the innovative "Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid," the sci-fi spoof "The Man With Two Brains," the provocative "Pennies From Heaven," and as Lily Tomlin's haunted other half in "All of Me."

Martin wears three hats on the soon-to-be-released "Three Amigos," including that of executive producer. Directed by John Landis, "Three Amigos" was written by Martin, Lorne Michaels and Randy Newman. Additionally, he toplines the cast along with Chevy Chase and Martin Short.

Martin is presently shooting "Roxanne," a screenplay he wrote for Columbia Pictures. Directed by Fred Schepisi and produced by Daniel Melnick and Michael Rachmil, Martin stars with Daryl Hannah, Rick Rossovich, Shelley Duvall and Fred Willard.

Underscoring the dramatic twists of plot and fate in

"Little Shop of Horrors" are Ronette, Crystal and Chiffon, a trio of street urchins played by MICHELLE WEEKS, TICHINA ARNOLD and TISHA CAMPBELL.

All are native New Yorkers, who knew each other either from school or from appearing in such musicals as "Sing Mahalia Sing," "The Me Nobody Knows" and "Mama, I want to Sing."

Michelle, who plays Ronette--at 18 the oldest and "toughest" of the three--began singing at four and acting at 14. She completed a run in the starring role of Emma in "The Tap Dance Kid" just before filming "Little Shop of Horrors."

Sixteen-year-old Tichina--whose Crystal is the youngest and "most talkative"--is a student at New York's Music and Art High School. She began acting at 11, when she appeared on stage in "The Me Nobody Knows." She plans to study psychology at college.

Tisha, who plays 17-year-old Chiffon--"the shy one"--is the only member of the trio to come from a theatrical family. At 5 she won a car in a talent show, and has since appeared in various musical shows, including "Mama, I Want To Sing" and "Really Rosie." She is a student at Arts High in New Jersey.

Short but sparkling contributions to "Little Shop of Horrors" are made by John Candy, James Belushi and Christopher Guest.

As radio announcer Weird Wink Wilkenson, JOHN CANDY

puts his considerable heft through quick character changes, relying on voice and sound effects to fool his listeners.

It's child's play for the Toronto-born Candy, who first gained recognition in television's "SCTV," where he impersonated (with devastating precision) such out-sized stars as Orson Welles, Divine and Luciano Pavarotti. He also won two Emmys for his writing contributions.

Candy made his film debut as an extra in "Class of '44," but quickly found his metier in such hugely successful comedies as "The Blues Brothers," "Stripes," "National Lampoon's Vacation" and "Splash."

He has since co-starred in "Brewster's Millions," "Volunteers" and the recently released "Armed and Dangerous."

Portraying a high-powered entrepreneur--who plots to get his cut from Audrey II's cuttings--is JAMES BELUSHI, currently winning wide acclaim as Bernie Litko in "About Last Night." (The character, a crudely endearing sexist, was originally performed by Belushi in David Mamet's "Sexual Perversity in Chicago," the Obie-winning play on which "About Last Night" is based.)

Born and raised in Chicago, Belushi graduated from the University of Illinois and spent two years with the city's fertile Second City troupe before signing on as the Pirate King in Joseph Papp's touring production of "The Pirates of Penzance."

Following the show to Broadway, Belushi remained in New York for a two-year stint on television's "Saturday

Night Live," then returned to his hometown for "Sexual Perversity."

After making his film debut in "Thief," he played a cameo in "Trading Places," starred in "The Man With One Red Shoe," and co-starred as a rock 'n' roll deejay in "Salvador."

CHRISTOPHER GUEST--the customer who gets rose fever from Audrey II--is a native New Yorker who studied clarinet at the High School of Music and Art, then began his career as a National Lampoon satirist.

After several years of "Lampooning" as both writer and performer--59 radio shows, three-Grammy-nominated albums, the off-Broadway hit, "Lemmings"--Guest won an Emmy for co-writing television's "Lily Tomlin Special," in which he also co-starred.

As a television actor, Guest has ranged from comedy to drama, scoring as Jeb Magruder in "Blind Ambition," opposite Bette Davis in "A Piano for Mrs. Cimino," and in the long-running series "Laverne & Shirley" and "All in the Family."

In addition to portraying rock star Nigel Tufnel in Rob Reiner's hit film, "This Is Spinal Tap," Guest has appeared on screen in "The Long Riders," "Girlfriends" and "Heartbeeps."

About the Filmmakers...

Director FRANK OZ is carving a unique niche for himself in motion pictures.

For Jim Henson's Muppets, he performs Miss Piggy, Fozzie Bear, Animal, Cookie Monster, Bert and Grover.

As an actor, he appeared in brief but telling roles in "The Blues Brothers," "Trading Places" and "An American Werewolf in London" before making an overnight folk-hero--and Time cover-boy--of Yoda, the wrinkled, lovable Jedi sage in "The Empire Strikes Back."

As a filmmaker, Oz served as producer (with David Lazer) on the Muppets' second movie, "The Great Muppet Caper," co-directed "The Dark Crystal" with Jim Henson, then made his solo directing bow with "The Muppets Take Manhattan."

Producer DAVID GEFFEN, an entertainment entrepreneur whose involvements range from records and films to Broadway shows and talent management, began his career in 1964 in the mail room of the William Morris talent agency. Four years later, with agency co-worker Elliot Roberts, he formed Geffen-Roberts Management which shortly represented such clients as Joni Mitchell, Crosby, Stills and Nash, Neil Young and Jackson Browne.

In 1971, Geffen formed his own label, Asylum Records. He later merged the company with Elektra to form Elektra/Asylum, which soon became a recognized leader in the music industry, with such artists as The Eagles, Linda Ronstadt, Jackson Browne, Queen, Carly Simon and Bob Dylan, among others.

In 1975, Geffen was named Vice Chairman of Warner

Bros.' film division, a post in which he was responsible for the successful pictures "Oh, God!," "The Late Show" and "Greased Lightning."

From 1976 through 1979, Geffen taught a course on the music business at UCLA and Yale University, and, in 1980, was appointed by Governor Brown to the Board of Regents of the University of California.

In 1980, he returned full-force to the music industry with the formation of his own Geffen Records, with such top talents as John Lennon/Yoko Ono, Donna Summer, Elton John and Peter Gabriel on the label.

The '80s also marked Geffen's entrance into theatrical productions, such as the smash hit "Dreamgirls," the Tony Award winning New York production "Cats," and the Dramatist Guild-winning "Little Shop of Horrors." His other notable theatrical efforts included "Master Harold and the Boys" and the Royal Shakespeare Company's "Good."

The '80s also brought Geffen's renewed involvement with motion pictures with formation of The Geffen Film Company. Under his personal guidance, Geffen's film arm has brought to the screen the controversial drama of two young women athletes contending for Olympic gold in "Personal Best," the immensely-successful Tom Cruise,-starring youth comedy "Risky Business," Albert Brooks' well-received yuppy dropout film "Lost In America" and Martin Scorsese's critically-heralded comedy-drama "After Hours."

Most recently, Geffen launched the new Broadway play

"Social Security," toplining Marlo Thomas and Ron Silver.

HOWARD ASHMAN, who wrote the screenplay and lyrics for the film version of "Little Shop of Horrors," also wrote the book and lyrics for the musical play, and directed the original off-Broadway production and its London counterpart.

A native of Baltimore, Ashman has been associated with the Houston, Pittsburgh and San Francisco Opera companies, the Manhattan Theatre Club, Princeton's McCarter Theatre and New York's WPA Theatre, where he was Artistic Director from 1976 to 1982. He also wrote the book and lyrics (with Dennis Green) for the musical version of Kurt Vonnegut's "God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater."

For his contributions to the stage production of "Little Shop of Horrors," Ashman received the Outer Critics' Circle Award for best lyrics and best off-Broadway musical, the New York Drama Critics' Award for best musical, and the Drama Desk Award for best lyrics.

When composer ALAN MENKEN won the 1982/83 Outer Critics' Circle Award for his music in the stage version of "Little Shop of Horrors," it was the result, he says, of a longstanding friendship and collaboration with Howard Ashman. The pair previously teamed on "God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater," a 1979 musical of Kurt Vonnegut's book, which marked Menken's first major production.

It was while studying medicine at New York University that Menken made the switch to music composition. Joining Lehman Engel's BMI Musical Theatre Workshop, he wrote the

music and/or lyrics for its productions, as well as songs heard in revues and cabaret acts around New York.

After having his career anointed with "Rosewater," Menken went on to collaborate with Steve Brown on "Attina, Evil Queen of the Galaxy," and to write the music and lyrics for "Real Life Funnies," a revue based on the cartoons of The Village Voice's Stan Mack.

He is currently collaborating with Tom Eyen on "Kicks."

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